3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

of their dreams. My informant, having dreamed that he was planting sugar-cane, intended to grow some.

Through the soul one knows what is going to happen. For instance, if one dreams that he shall be killed, it is likely that he is to die an unnatural death. If he is traveling about and dreams of home it is better to turn back. A man who is away from his wife can talk to her in the evening and she will see him in her dreams. It is the soul which walks about during the night. If one dreams of an algarroba or that he is working in a field, it means that he has still a long time to live. If during the absence of a member of the group someone dies, the absent one will dream about the dead person who appears to him naked. Generally when a traveler returns to his village there is no need to tell him of what has happened during his absence, for he is informed of everything through his dreams which occur when his soul returns to his family. Very often in dreams one sees dead relatives. The soul has gone to the underworld and paid them a visit. Sometimes the dead return by night to the houses of the living who then dream of the departed.

b) *Remedies*

The Indians call a certain fungus *ăxǫ̆lĕut*. According to them it is the excrement of the fox which towards morning transforms itself into a fungus. It is used as a remedy for scalding. A fragment of the plant is toasted, powdered, mixed with fat and the white of an egg and spread on the burned place. The fat and the egg white are desirable but not indispensable ingredients for in a pinch the toasted powder is sufficient. This same plant sometimes obturates the penis of a sick person and prevents him from urinating. If when sucking the sick man the medicine-man gets out a fragment of this plant it most certainly means that the patient will recover. When the extremity of a limb aches it is to be tied at intervals of about half an

776 The Indians will willingly speak about the lewo, mythical animals which live in the lakes and which look like serpents. Their [821] breath forms the rainbow (lewo-tutsax, which means lewo breath). [841] The lewo have a horror of women during the period of menstruation and if any woman should approach a pool or river in that state, the lewo will call up a tempest.

The Witch Doctors

756 The witch doctors get their power from the spirits, who teach them the magic dances. The soul of a witch doctor can be snatched away by a wilan or spirit and shut up in a tree. The spirit teaches him the language of the spirits and when his education is complete the spirit blows upon the novice and confers upon him the power of caring for the sick by the same means, that is, by blowing upon them. The meetings between spirits and witch doctors are very frequent, and take place at night.

In order to take the soul out of the body and send it on a supernatural mission, the witch doctors inhale up their noses a powder made ●[278] with roasted grains of sebil (Piptadenia sp.) to which they sometimes [824] add powdered tobacco. These inhalations cause them to become dazed [16] and then it is that the witch doctor's soul abandons his body and turns into an insect or a bird--usually the yulo--and goes off to alight on a tree which stands in the middle of a lake. This tree is perpetually shaking and it is extremely difficult to stay on it. A grave misfortune overtakes those who fall for they are immediately devoured by the palometas ["piranas" - a laterally flattened, ferocious, small fish - Translator] and crocodiles which swam in the lake. If the witch doctors are expert in their art they change themselves into lizards and so manage to stay on the tree. It is supposed that each witch doctor owns a branch of that tree which is closely allied with his destiny. While the leaves remain green the witch doctor enjoys good health and is in no danger but as soon as the branch starts to wither then his troubles begin.

[821] The witch doctors can predict good and bad weather for a long time in advance, for on their journeyings they see the green and dry leaves corresponding to the good and bad seasons of the year.

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 S17 Mataco S17

586 [577] Laziness and incompetence are other things that often lead to divorce. If it is the woman who justly is accused of these faults she can be forced out of the house and her parents will take no counter steps. If in such circumstances there are small children in the marriage, she may be allowed to take them, but if the husband continues to send them small gifts and food he retains the right to them and gets them back at an age of 5–6, as they belong to his band. If, on the other hand, he fails to show them any attention, he loses them and may not even be allowed to play with them. Should it be the man who is lazy, his wife makes no mention of it but her parents become angry with him. One day when the man is out seeking food, the parents exhort their daughter to hide herself with some family. When the husband returns home he discovers what is going on without his in-laws saying anything to him. He also says nothing, but begins to collect his things together. He will not leave the house until nightfall, unseen, because he is ashamed, and then return to his family. It is said that this custom was far more widespread [178] a generation ago than it is now. Several women, with a smile, expressed their relief at this as "they would never manage to have any fun out of a man before he was kicked out by his in-laws, for nowadays all men are lazy".

[842] The third—and last—cause of divorce socially recognised is: childless marriages. It is always the woman who is considered to be sterile, and consequently the man who takes the initiative for divorce. However, in such cases it is he who leaves the house, presumably because he has already sought contact with a possible [587] new wife. His sister may help him to get into touch with one of her friends and let them meet secretly in the forest to discover whether they like each other. The man thus leaves the house as he falls under the rule governing unfaithful husband, and not because his wife is sterile.

Whatever the reason for a Mataco divorce, it is always a heavy blow, both [587] morally and economically, for the spouse that is left. The economic loss can [589] only be made good by re-marriage, and this nearly always takes place. Unmarried persons are reduced to living partly on the bounty of the family as occupations are so sharply divided according to sex.

762 A person who feels himself rejected or a victim of unhappy love sometimes commits suicide, which with the Mataco appears to occur particularly in this connexion and is always done in the same manner. The unfortunate one goes [278] alone into the forest and collects the very poisonous fruit of the *sacha sandia* (Capparis salicifolia), which the Indian then cooks lightly and eats. After a few hours when no remedy is possible, the Indian returns home and lies down to sleep. Death comes very shortly. In cases of suicide the spouse of the dead person will [682] always be pointed to as the one responsible. In consequence, the family of the dead person will in many cases start a campaign against that of the spouse to obtain blood vengeance or, more probably, to secure economic compensation.

182 684 628 According to Mataco unwritten law infidelity is severely punished by the loss of home and children. This should occasion no surprise, for adultery, on account